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D.C. office of FBI focuses on spies

By Bill Gertz
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Curbing increased Soviet bloc espionage in the Washington area is the "top priority" of the FBI's Washington field office, according to the special agent in charge of the office.

"The bureau has beefed up its resources in that area and will continue to do so," said Dana Caro, special agent in charge of the Washington field office, the second largest FBI office in the country. "It's the top priority in my office."

"They [the Soviets] are very aggressive and very professional, and so are we," Mr. Caro said in an interview.

He said the FBI's success in handling several local espionage cases shows that more and better counter-

intelligence agents have improved the bureau's ability to curb foreign spying.

Mr. Caro, a 24-year FBI veteran, took over the Washington field office last month after serving four years as head of the Baltimore office. As special agent in charge here he is responsible for directing investigations by more than 500 FBI agents.

Mr. Caro would not comment directly on the Soviets' use of a new consulate in Northwest Washington as a base for espionage, but said "obviously, the intelligence apparatus of the Soviet Union is very aggressive in the Washington, D.C., area."

He praised the efforts of the State Department's Office of Foreign Missions, which was set up in 1982 to work with the FBI in keeping tabs on the activities of foreign diplomats in

the United States.

Setting up the office, Mr. Caro said, "was long overdue."

"I think it's a very valuable asset for the United States," he said.

Mr. Caro defended the FBI against congressional critics who have charged that some FBI officials appear overconfident with regard to the threat of domestic terrorism.

Last month, Sen. Malcolm Wallop, Wyoming Republican, rapped FBI Executive Assistant Director Oliver B. Revell for "smugness" about threats by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi to send suicide teams into the United States.

Mr. Revell had told The Washington Times that "A wave of 10,000 suicide bombers is not one of the things we are concerned about."

Mr. Caro said that, while it may

not be possible to anticipate every action of terrorists, if an attack does occur, "we're going to respond and respond well," he said.

"We are prepared," he said.

Mr. Caro said FBI counterterrorism agents, including hostage rescue teams and special weapons teams, have prepared contingency plans for a variety of terrorist incidents.

Without elaborating, he said FBI evidence of links between some U.S. "revolutionary" groups was limited to "sympathies" with international terrorists. He discounted the idea that international terrorists have established a "worldwide conspiracy."

In comparing past FBI policies with current practices, Mr. Caro noted that FBI agents once considered the media to be avoided.

Now, however, he said, "The public has a need to know — I'm a firm believer in that."